

Monkey Bridgrooms

folktales

selected and edited by



D. L. Ashliman
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The Monkey Boy

India

There was once a man who had six sons and two daughters, and he died leaving his wife pregnant of a ninth child.

And when the child was born it proved to be a monkey.

The villagers and relations advised the mother to make away with it, but she refused, saying, "Chando [the supreme god of the Santals] knows why he has given me such a child, but as he has done so, I will rear it."

All her relations said that if she chose to rear a monkey they would turn her out of the family. However, she persisted that she would do so at all costs. So they sent her to live with her child in a hut outside the village, and the monkey boy grew up and learned to talk like a human being.

One day his elder brothers began to clear the jungle for cultivation, and the monkey boy took a hatchet and went with them. He asked where he could clear land for himself, and in fun they showed him the place where the jungle was thickest. So he went there and drove his hatchet into the trunk of a tree and then returned and watched his brothers working hard clearing the scrub, and when they had finished their work, he cleared his hatchet and returned home with them.

Every day he did the same. And one day his brothers asked why he spent all his time with them, but he said that he only came to them when he was tired of cutting down trees. They laughed at this and said that they would like to see his clearing, so he took them to the place, and to their astonishment they saw a large clearing, bigger than they had been able to make for themselves. Then the brothers burnt the jungle they had cut down and began to plow the land.

But the monkey boy's mother had no plow or cattle nor any seed rice. The only thing in the house was a pumpkin, so he took the seed out of the pumpkin and sowed it in his clearing. His brothers asked what he had sown, and he told them, "Rice."

The brothers plowed and sowed and used to go daily to watch the growing crop, and one day they went to have a look at the monkey boy's crop, and they saw that it was pumpkins and not rice, and they laughed at him. When their crop was ripe the brothers prepared to offer the first fruits, and the monkey boy watched them that he might observe the same ceremonies as they. One day they brought home the first fruits and offered them to the *bongas*, and they invited the monkey boy and his mother to come to the feast which followed the offering.

They both went and enjoyed themselves; and two or three days later the monkey boy said that he would also have a feast of first fruits, so he told his mother to clear the courtyard, and invited his brothers, and invited his brothers, and he purified himself and went to his clearing and brought home the biggest pumpkin that had grown there. This he offered to the spirits. He sliced off the top of it as if it were the head of a fowl, and as he did so he saw that the inside was full of rice. He called his mother, and they filled a winnowing fan with the rice, and there was enough besides to nearly fill a basket.

They were delighted at this windfall but kept the matter secret lest they should be robbed. The monkey boy told his mother to be sure and cook enough rice so that his brothers and their wives might have as much as ever they could eat, and not merely a small helping such as they had given him, and if necessary he would go and fetch another pumpkin. So his mother boiled the rice.

When the time fixed for the feast came, nothing was to be seen of the brothers because they did not expect that there would really be anything for them to eat. So the monkey boy went and fetched them, and when they came to the feast they were astonished to have as much rice as they could eat. When the crop was quite ripe the monkey boy gathered all the pumpkins and got sufficient rice from them to last for the whole year.

After this the brothers went out to buy horses, and the monkey boy went with them, and as he had no money he took nothing but a coil of rope. His brothers were ashamed to have him with them and drove him away, so he went on ahead and got first to the place where the horse dealer lived. The brothers arrived late in the evening and decided to make their purchases the following morning and ride their horses home, so they camped for the night. The monkey boy spent the night hiding on the rafters of the stable. And in the night the horses began to talk to each other and discussed which could gallop farthest, and one mare said, "I can gallop twelve *kos* on the ground and then twelve *kos* in the air." [One *kos* equals about two miles.]

When the monkey boy heard this he got down and lamed the mare by running a splinter into her hoof. The next morning the brothers bought the horses which pleased them and rode off. Then the monkey boy went to the horse dealer and asked why the mare was lame and advised him to apply remedies. But the dealer said that that was useless; when horses got ill they always died. Then the monkey boy asked if he would sell the mare and offered to give the coil of rope in exchange. The dealer, thinking that the animal was useless, agreed. So the monkey boy led it away, but when he was out of sight he took out the splinter, and the lameness at once ceased. Then he mounted the mare and rode after his brothers, and when he had nearly overtaken them he rose into the air and flew past his brothers and arrived first at home. There he tied up the mare outside his house and went and bathed and had his dinner and waited for his brothers.

They did not arrive for a full hour afterwards, and when they saw the monkey boy and his mount they wanted to know how he had got home first. He boasted of how swift his mare was, and so they arranged to have a race and match their horses against his. The race took place two or three days later, and the monkey boy's mare easily beat all the other horses. She galloped twelve *kos* on the ground and twelve *kos* in the air. Then they wanted to change their horses for his, but he said they had had first choice and he was not going to change.

In two or three years the monkey boy became rich, and then he announced that he wanted to marry. This puzzled his mother for she thought that no human girl would marry him while a monkey would not be able to talk. So she told him that he must find a bride for himself. One day he set off to look for a wife and came to a tank in which some girls were bathing, and he took up the cloth belonging to one of them and ran up a tree with it, and when the girl missed it and saw it hanging down from the tree, she borrowed a cloth from her friends and went and asked the monkey boy for her own. He told her that she could only have it back if she consented to marry him. She was surprised to find that he could talk, and as he conversed she was bewitched by him and let him pull her up into the tree by her hair, and she called out to her friends to go home and leave her where she was. Then he took her on his back and ran off home with her.

The girl's father and relations turned out with bows and arrows to look for the monkey who had carried her off, but he had gone so far away that they never found him. When the monkey boy appeared with his bride all the villagers were astonished that he had found anyone to marry him, but everything was made ready for the marriage as quickly as possible, and all the relations were invited, and the wedding took place, and the monkey boy and his wife lived happily ever after.

- Source: Cecil Henry Bompas, *Folklore of the Santal Parganas* (London: David Nutt, 1909), no. 15, pp. 56-60.
- The episode in which the hero gains control over his future bride by stealing an item of her clothing plays an integral role in most [swan maiden tales](#).
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The Monkey and the Girl

India

Once upon a time the boys and girls of a village used to watch the crops of *bur* [a kind of grain] growing by a river, and there was a Hanuman monkey who wished to eat the *bur*, but they drove him away.

So he made a plan. He used to make a garland of flowers and go with it to the field, and, when he was driven away, he would leave the flowers behind. And the children were pleased with the flowers and ended by making friends with the monkey and did not drive him away.

There was one of the young girls who was fascinated by the monkey and promised to marry him. Some of the other children told this in the village, and the girl's father and mother came to hear of it and were angry, and the father took some of the villagers and went and shot the monkey.

Then they decided not to throw away the body, but to burn it like the corpse of a man. So they made a pyre and put the body on it and set fire to it. Just then the girl came, and they told her to go away, but she said that she wished to see whether they really burned him like a man. So she stood by, and when the pyre was in full blaze, she called out, "Oh look what is happening to the stars in the sky!"

At this everyone looked up at the sky. Then she took some sand which she had in the fold of her cloth and threw it into the air, and it fell into their eyes and blinded them.

While they were rubbing the sand out of their eyes the girl leapt onto the pyre, and was burned along with the monkey and died a *suttee* -- a Hindu widow's suicidal cremation on her husband's funeral pyre as a demonstration of devotion]. Her father and brothers were very angry at this and said that the girl must have had a monkey's soul, and so she was fascinated by him. And so saying they bathed and went home.

- Source: Cecil Henry Bompas, *Folklore of the Santal Parganas* (London: David Nutt, 1909), no. 32, pp. 128-129.
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The Monkey Husband

India

One very hot day some children were bathing in a pool, when a Hanuman monkey snatched up the cloth which one of the girls had left on the bank, and ran up a tree with it. When the children came out of the water and went to take up their clothes, they found one missing, and looking about, they saw the monkey in the tree with it. They begged the Hanuman to give it back, but the monkey only said, "I will not give it unless its owner consents to marry me."

Then they began to throw sticks and stones at him, but he climbed to the top of the tree out of the way.

Then they ran and told the parents of the girl whose cloth had been stolen. And they called their neighbors and went with bows and arrows and threatened to shoot the monkey if he did not give up the cloth, but he still said that he would not, unless the girl would marry him. Then they shot all their arrows at him, but not one of them hit him.

Then the neighbors said, "This child is fated to be the monkey, and that is why we cannot hit him."

Then the girl's father and mother began to cry and sang:

Give the girl her cloth
Her silk cloth, monkey boy.

And he answered:

If she consents to marry me, I will give it.
If she consents, I will put it in her hand.

And as he did not listen to the father and mother, her father's younger brother and his wife sang the same song, but in vain. And then the girl herself begged for it, and thereupon the monkey let down one end of the cloth to her; and when she caught hold of it, he pulled her up into the tree, and there made her put on her cloth, and ran off with her on his back.

The girl was quite willing to go with him and called out as she was carried away, "Never mind, father and mother. I am going away."

The Hanuman took her to a cave in the mountains, and they lived on fruit: mangoes or jack or whatever fruit was in season. The monkey climbed the trees and shook the fruit down. But if the girl saw by the marks of teeth that the monkey had bitten off any fruit, instead of only shaking it down, she would not eat it, and pretended that she had had enough, for she would not eat the leavings of the monkey.

At last the girl got tired of having only fruit to eat, and demanded rice. So the monkey took her to a bazaar, and leaving her on the outskirts of the village under a tree, he went and stole some pots from a potter and rice and salt and turmeric and pulse and sweetmeats from other shops, and brought them to the girl. Then she collected sticks and lit a fire and cooked a meal. And the monkey liked the cooked food, and asked her to cook for him every day. So they stayed there several days.

Then the girl asked for more clothes, and the monkey tried to steal them too, but the shopkeepers were on the watch and drove him away.

The girl soon got tired of sleeping under a tree, so they went back to the cave, and the monkey gathered mangoes and jack-fruit and told her to go and sell them in the market, and then she would be able to buy cloth. But when she had sold the fruit, she stayed in the village and took service with a well-to-do shopkeeper, and never returned to the monkey.

The monkey watched for her and searched for her in vain, and returned sorrowfully to his hill. But the girl stayed on in the village and eventually married one of the villagers.

- Source: Cecil Henry Bompas, *Folklore of the Santal Parganas* (London: David Nutt, 1909), no. 70, pp. 212-214.
- The episode in which the hero gains control over his future bride by stealing an item of her clothing also plays an integral role in most [swan maiden tales](#).
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Juan Wearing a Monkey's Skin

Philippines

Once upon a time there was a couple which was at first childless. The father was very anxious to have a son to inherit his property, so he went to the church daily, and prayed God to give him a child, but in vain.

One day, in his great disappointment, the man exclaimed without thinking, "O great God! Let me have a son, even if it is in the form of a monkey!" And only a few days later his wife gave birth to a monkey.

The father was so much mortified that he wanted to kill his son; but finally his better reason prevailed, and he spared the child. He said to himself, "It is my fault, I know; but I uttered that invocation without thinking."

So instead of putting the monkey to death, the couple just hid it from visitors; and whenever anyone asked for the child, they merely answered, "Oh, he died long ago."

The time came when the monkey grew to be old enough to marry. He went to his father, and said, "Give me your blessing, father! for I am going away to look for a wife."

The father was only too glad to be freed from this obnoxious son, so he immediately gave him his blessing. Before letting him go, however, the father said to the monkey, "You must never come back again to our house."

"Very well, I will not," said the monkey.

While the monkey then left his father's house, and went to find his fortune. One night he dreamed that there was a castle in the midst of the sea, and that in this castle dwelt a princess of unspeakable beauty. The princess had been put there so that no one might discover her existence. The monkey, who had been baptized two days after his birth and was named Juan, immediately repaired to the palace of the king. There he posted a letter which read as follows: "I, Juan, know that your majesty has a daughter."

Naturally the king was very angry to have his secret discovered. He immediately sent soldiers to look for Juan. Juan was soon found, and brought to the palace. The king said to him, "How do you know that I have a daughter? If you can bring her here, I will give her to you for a wife. If not, however, your head shall be cut off from your body."

"O your majesty!" said Juan, "I am sure that I can find her and bring her here. I am willing to lose my head if within three days I fail to fulfil my promise." After he had said this, Juan withdrew, and sadly went out to look for the hidden princess.

As he was walking along the road, he heard the cry of a bird. He looked up, and saw a bird caught between two boughs so that it could not escape. The bird said to him, "O monkey! if you will but release me, I will give you all I have."

"Oh, no!" said the monkey. "I am very hungry, and would much rather eat you."

"If you will but spare my life," said the bird, "I will give you anything you want."

"On one condition only will I set you free," said the monkey. "You must procure for me the ring of the princess who lives in the midst of the sea."

"Oh, that's an easy thing to do," said the bird. So the monkey climbed the tree and set the bird free.

The bird immediately flew to the island in the sea, where fortunately it found the princess refreshing herself in her garden. The princess was so charmed with the song of the bird that she looked up and said, "O little bird! if you will only promise to live with me, I will give you anything you want."

"All right, said the bird. "Give me your ring, and I will forever live with you."

The princess held up the ring; and the bird suddenly snatched it and flew away with it. It gave the ring to the monkey, who was, of course, delighted to get it.

Now the monkey jogged along the road until finally he saw three witches. He approached them and said to them, "You are the very beings for whom I have spent the whole day looking. God has sent me here from heaven to punish you for your evil doings toward innocent persons. So I must eat you up."

Now, witches are said to be afraid of ill-looking persons, although they themselves are the ugliest beings in all the world. So these three were terribly frightened by the monkey's threat, and said, "O sir! spare our lives, and we will do anything for you!"

"Very well, I will spare you if you can execute my order. From this shore you must build a bridge which leads to the middle of the sea, where the castle of the princess is situated."

"That shall be speedily done," replied the witches; and they at once gathered leaves, which they put on their backs. Then they plunged into the water. Immediately after them a bridge was built. Thus the monkey was now able to go to the castle. Here he found the princess. She was very much surprised to see this evil-looking animal before her, but she was much more frightened when the monkey showed her the ring which the bird had given him, and claimed her for his wife.

"It is the will of God that you should go with me," said the monkey, after the princess had shown great repugnance towards him. "You either have to go with me or perish."

Thinking it was useless to attempt to resist such a mighty foe, the princess finally yielded.

The monkey led her to the king's palace and presented her before her parents; but no sooner had the king and queen seen their daughter in the power of the beast, than they swooned. When they had recovered, they said simultaneously, "Go away at once, and never come back her again, you girl of infamous taste! Who are you? You are not the princess we left in the castle. You are of villain's blood, and the very air which you exhale does suffocate us. So with no more ado depart at once!"

The princess implored her father to have pity, saying that it was the will of God that she should be the monkey's wife. "Perhaps I have been enchanted by him, for I am powerless to oppose him."

But all her remonstrance was in vain, the king shut his ears against any deceitful or flattering words that might fall from the lips of his faithless and disobedient daughter. Seeing that the king was obstinate, the couple turned their backs on the palace and decided to find a more hospitable home. So the monkey now took his wife to a neighboring mountain, and here they settled.

One day the monkey noticed that the princess was very sad and pale. He said to her, "Why are you so sad and unhappy, my darling? What is the matter?"

"Nothing. I am just sorry to have only a monkey for my husband. I become sad when I think of my past happiness."

"I am not a monkey, my dear. I am a real man, born of human parents. Didn't you know that I was baptized by the priest, and that my name is Juan?"

As the princess would not believe him, the monkey went to a neighboring hut and there cast off his disguise (*balit cayu*). He at once returned to the princess. She was amazed to see a sparkling youth of not more than twenty years of age -- a prince -- kneeling before her. "I can no longer keep you in ignorance," he said. "I am your husband, Juan."

"Oh, no! I cannot believe you. Don't try to deceive me! My husband is a monkey. But, with all his defects, I still cling to him and love him. Please go away at once, lest my husband find you here! He will be jealous, and my kill us both."

"Oh, no! my darling. I am your husband, Juan. I only disguised myself as a monkey."

But still the princess would not believe him. At last she said to him, "If you are my real husband, you must give me a proof of the fact." So Juan (we shall hereafter call him by this name) took her to the place where he had cast off his monkey-skin.

The princess was now convinced, and said to herself, "After all, I was not wrong in the belief I have entertained from the beginning, that it was the will of God that I should marry this monkey, this man."

Juan and the princess now agreed to go back to the palace and tell the story. So they went. As soon as the king and queen saw the couple, they were very much surprised. But to remove their doubt, Juan immediately related to the king all that had happened. Thus the king and queen were finally reconciled to the at first hated couple. Juan and his wife succeeded to the throne on the death of the king, and lived peacefully and happily during their reign.

The story is now ended. Thus we see that God compensated the father and mother of Juan for their religious zeal by giving them a son, but punished them for not being content with what he gave them by taking the son away from them again, for Juan never recognized his parents.

- Source: Dean S. Fansler, *Filipino Popular Tales* (Lancaster and New York: American Folk-Lore Society, 1921), no. 19, pp. 178-182.
- Fansler's source: "Narrated by Lorenzo Licup, a Pampango from Angeles, Pampanga."
- Copyright 1921 by the American Folk-Lore Society.
- The beginning of this tale is reminiscent of the opening episodes of [Hans-My-Hedgehog](#) by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm.

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The Enchanted Prince

Philippines

Many years ago there lived a very rich king in a beautiful city near a wild forest, the home of many wicked witches.

The king had a gallant son named Ucay, who fell in love with a beautiful young witch, the daughter of the most bitter enemy of his father.

When Ucay became old enough to marry, his father requested him to select the most beautiful lady in the city for his wife; but the prince would neither select one, nor would he tell his father about his love for the witch. So the rich king ordered his soldiers to bring to the palace all the beautiful women that could be found in the kingdom.

His order was soon obeyed, but none of the girls suited the prince. So the king took the matter of selection into his own hands; and, after choosing a very handsome girl, he forced his son to marry her.

Out of fear, Ucay consented to do as his father bade him. But the beautiful young witch to whom he had already pledged his love became angry with him for his timidity, and so she resolved to change the city into a forest of beautiful trees. Her fickle lover she transformed into a monkey, who should live in the tallest tree, and who should not be able to recover his human shape till five centuries had past, when a charming girl would live with him and love him more than anything else. Moreover, she changed the king's subjects into other animals as she pleased. No sooner had the marriage of the prince been proclaimed, then, than the desire of the witch was accomplished, to the great surprise of the neighboring cities.

Four centuries had already passed. The wonderful disappearance of the city was already forgotten, and people from other places began to build houses in the enchanted city. The monkey-prince was always watching for an opportunity to catch a beautiful girl who should break the spell that kept him in his miserable condition. Soon a church was built near the foot of the tree in which he lived. He had already succeeded in capturing two ladies, but they had died of fear. After incalculable suffering and extraordinary patience, the time for his recovery came at last.

One Sunday morning before the mass was over, a very beautiful girl, the daughter of a poor man, came out of the church and sat at the foot of the tree. She had been disappointed in her love with a rich man's son, who had forsaken her in order to marry the daughter of a rich man. So she wished to die.

When the monkey-prince saw her sitting there alone, he noiselessly went down, carefully took her by the right hand, and carried her to the top of the tree. She would have died of fright, as was the fate of the two former women, had she not seen in the monkey's eyes a noble look that filled her with wonder and sympathy. As days went by, she lived on delicious fruits which were entirely strange to her; and her love for the poor creature grew greater and greater, until at last she loved him more than anything else.

On the evening of the tenth day she was surprised to find herself beside a gallant prince in a richly decorated room. At first she thought that she was dreaming; but when the prince woke up, kissed her, and then told her the history of his life, she knew that it was real.

She was so astonished, that she exclaimed, "Ah, me! God is wise!"

The next morning she was crowned queen of her husband's happy subjects, whom she had restored from the enchantment of the wicked witch. Everyone in the kingdom loved his new queen as long as he lived.

- Source: Dean S. Fansler, *Filipino Popular Tales* (Lancaster and New York: American Folk-Lore Society, 1921), no. 41, pp. 301-303.
- Fansler's source: "Narrated by Pedro D. L. Sorreta, a Bicol from Virac, Albay, who heard the story from his grandfather."
- Copyright 1921 by the American Folk-Lore Society.
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Mr. Monkey, the Bridegroom

French Louisiana

There was a monkey which fell in love with a beautiful young girl. He dressed as a man and went to call on her. He was so well received that one day he took his best friend with him to see his lady-love. The young girl's father asked Mr. Monkey's friend some questions about his daughter's lover.

The friend said that Mr. Monkey was good and rich, but there was a secret about him.

The father wanted to know the secret, but the friend said he would tell him another day.

Mr. Monkey was finally engaged to the young lady, and the night of the wedding he invited his friend to the supper. The latter was jealous of Mr. Monkey, and at the end of the supper he began to sing. This was a song that made all monkeys dance, wherever they wished to or not, so Mr. Monkey looked at his friend and beckoned him to stop singing.

He continued, however, to sing, and all at once Mr. Monkey got up and began to dance. He jumped about so wildly that his tail came out of his clothes, and everyone saw that he was a monkey.

The father understood the secret, and beat him dreadfully.

His friend, however, ran off, dancing and singing.

- Source: Alc  e Fortier, *Louisiana Folk-Tales in French [Creole] Dialect and English Translation* (Boston and New York: Published for the American Folk-Lore Society by Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1895), no. 9, pp. 27-29.
- Fortier's source: "Informant, M  ranthe, colored nurse, Hospital Street, New Orleans."
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